

Video Game Stoplight

By Maryssa Dennis
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(Based on a true story)

What could Nathan
do to get to green?



Nathan's fingers smashed the buttons on the controller. He was so close to beating this level!

He stared at the TV while his rocket ship dodged the green blasts.

"Nathan, time for dinner!" Mom called.

Bam! Nathan's ship got hit. Nathan groaned. Now he'd have to restart. But he knew he could beat this level if he tried just one more time.

Dad came into the room. "Did you hear Mom? It's time to eat."

Nathan sighed and paused the game. He and Dad sat down with the rest of the family. Nathan ate his food as fast as he could. He wanted to get back to his game.

"Thanks! That was good." He jumped up from the table.

"Slow down, buddy," Dad said. "Mom and I want to talk with you."

Uh-oh. Was Nathan in trouble?

When everyone else was done, Mom and Dad stayed at the table with Nathan.

"We've noticed you've been spending a lot of time playing video games," Dad said.

Nathan squirmed. "They're really fun."

"That's true," Mom said. "But other things are fun too. We missed you yesterday when we were playing games as a family. We always have more fun when you're with us!"

Nathan had been working on an awesome bonus level last night. By the time he beat it, his family was done playing games. He felt kind of sad he missed it.

Nathan frowned. "Does this mean I'm not allowed to play video games anymore?"

"We're not saying that," Dad said. "We just want you to be more aware of how much time you spend on them. And to make sure they're not keeping you from other important things, like chores and homework and scripture study."

Nathan looked down. "I guess I have been falling behind on some stuff."

"We're sure you can figure out how to find a better balance," Dad said.

"Could you help me?" Nathan asked.

Mom smiled. "Of course."

Together, Nathan, Mom, and Dad decided how much video game time Nathan should have each day. Then they came up with a plan. They would put a poster of a stoplight next to the TV. If Nathan could stop playing when Mom and Dad called him, the stoplight would go on yellow. If they had to ask him more than once, it would go on red. And if he could stop on his own before they asked, it would go on green.

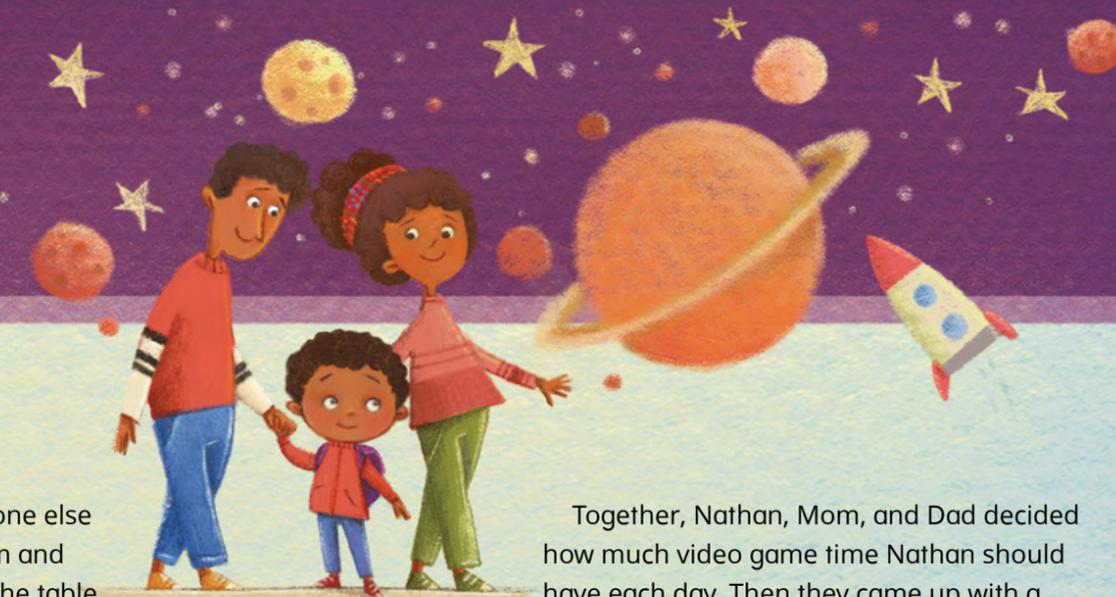
Each night before bedtime, they would talk about how Nathan did that day. If the stoplight was on red, he would have less time to play the next day. But if it stayed on green, Mom and Dad would take him to the space museum!

Nathan knew it would be hard to change his habits. But he was ready for the challenge.

For the first few days, the stoplight stayed on yellow. Then Nathan messed up, and it had to go to red. He wanted to try extra hard next time. So the next day, he set an alarm so he would know how long he'd been playing. Finally, he made it to green!

After a few days of green, Mom and Dad took him to the space museum. Nathan stared up at a giant rocket. It looked like the one in his game, but even cooler. He grinned. It was fun to be here with Mom and Dad. He wanted to see how long he could stay on green! ●

This story took place in the USA.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY CAROLINA FARIAS

You can make your own plan like Nathan did!

Talk to your parents for help.

